



Commonly Asked Questions About the CALFED Bay- Delta Program

What Is the Bay-Delta System?

The Bay-Delta system is an intricate web of waterways created at the junction of the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers and the watershed that feeds them. The estuary, where salt water from the Pacific Ocean flows through San Francisco Bay and mixes with fresh water from the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, touches the lives of millions of Californians and people across the nation who have never seen it. Fresh water flows through the Delta -- a network of natural and man-made waterways -- to help supply two-thirds of the state's population with drinking water, and irrigate 200 types of crops in the fertile Central Valley, including 45 percent of the nation's fruits and vegetables.

Historically, the Delta was a vast region of wetlands teeming with wildlife. In the 19th century, pioneer settlers diked the islands to create farmland. Today, the distinctive estuary ecosystem supports more than 750 species of fish, animals, and birds, including waterfowl migrating on the Pacific Flyway. It supplies and sustains fisheries, wildlife refuges, and 40,000 acres of critical wetlands.

The biological health and the biodiversity of the ecosystem depends upon the quality

and abundance of water that flows through the estuary. At times, California's need for water from the Bay-Delta system to serve its people and economy has competed with environmental needs.

What Is the CALFED Bay-Delta Program?

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is a cooperative effort among the public and state and federal agencies with management and regulatory responsibility in the Bay-Delta system (see letterhead). It was formed in 1994 by President Bill Clinton and Governor Pete Wilson as part of the Bay-Delta Accord to address the water management and environmental problems associated with the Bay-Delta system, including ecosystem restoration, water quality, water use efficiency and levee system integrity.

The mission of the CALFED Program is to develop a long-term, comprehensive plan that will restore ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta system.

What Are the Phases of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program?

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is divided into three phases. Completed in September 1996, Phase I identified and defined the problems confronting the Bay-Delta system. Also during Phase I, a mission statement and guiding principles were developed, along with Program objectives and an array of potential actions to meet them. During Phase II, currently underway, the CALFED Program is conducting a comprehensive programmatic environmental review process. Because the CALFED solution area is so large, and because CALFED is approaching its task in an integrated, comprehensive way, environmental review must be conducted on a very broad level. Phase II will conclude with approval of the final programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR). Program implementation will take place in Phase III. Site-specific, detailed environmental review will occur during Phase III, prior to the implementation of each proposed action. Implementation of the CALFED solution is expected to take 25 to 30 years.

What Is the Programmatic EIS/EIR?

As part of its analysis of potential Bay-Delta system solutions, and to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Protection Act, CALFED is preparing a draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR). This document identifies -- on a broad or "programmatic" level -- potential impacts associated with the actions it is proposing. Upon certification of this document, which will take place after a public

review and comment period, individual, site-specific environmental impact analysis will be conducted on all actions prior to implementation.

What Is the Phase II Interim Report?

During Phase II of the CALFED process, alternatives -- potential solutions identified during Phase I of the Program -- were evaluated against a number of criteria. This evaluation included technical analysis as well as stakeholder input. The results of this analysis are contained in the Phase II Interim Report. Designed for the general reader so that everyone can provide informed, focused comment, the Report describes the CALFED process, solution alternatives and the fundamental Program concepts, and analyses that have revealed the comparative technical advantages of each alternative. The Report also describes how the CALFED agencies will use analysis results in a public process to proceed to the selection of a preferred Program alternative by December 1998.

What Is the Public Comment Period?

The public comment period is 75 days, starting March 16 and ending June 1. NEPA requires at least 30 days and CEQA requires at least 45. Due to the comprehensive nature of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, however, it was decided that 75 days would give the public an opportunity to more fully review the documents for evaluation. Because the public has had input since the beginning of the process three years ago, many ideas have already been incorporated into the Program or eliminated for technical reasons identified in pre-feasibility studies, modeling studies and other detailed analysis. New ideas will be similarly evaluated.

How Can the Public Comment?

There will be 12 public hearings throughout the state starting April 21 and running through May 14. The public may comment at any of these meetings, or may submit comments in writing to Mr. Rick Breitenbach, CALFED Bay-Delta Program, 1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155, Sacramento, CA 95814.

What Happens to Comments?

Since the beginning of its activities, CALFED has solicited public feedback on all aspects of the Program's development, including goals, solution principles, priorities and implementation. Comments received during the public review period for the draft programmatic EIS/EIR will be grouped in categories and forwarded as they come in to the appropriate technical staff for evaluation. If necessary, technical analysis will be conducted as part of this evaluation process. Comments then will be incorporated

into a final programmatic EIS/EIR, which will also be circulated for public review and comment prior to signing of the Record of Decision and Certification.

What Are the Common Program Elements?

Common Program Elements were developed based on the realization that some categories of actions were so fundamental in addressing Bay-Delta system problems that they should not be optional. These Common Program Elements -- common to all the draft alternatives -- are ecosystem restoration, levee system integrity, water quality protection and water use efficiency. During Phase II, two additional Common Programs evolved from the original four, based on public input and technical analysis, because of their value in helping CALFED meet multiple objectives: water transfers and watershed management.

All of the Common Program Elements remain relatively unchanged from one alternative to another and are the foundation for the overall improvement of the Bay-Delta system. They represent a significant investment in the system, and will help substantially reduce resource conflicts. Each one of the programs is a major program of its own.

What Are the Alternatives?

The six common programs form the foundation for overall improvement of the Bay-Delta system. They remain relatively unchanged in each of the three potential solutions contained in the draft programmatic EIS/EIR. The three alternatives do differ, however, in how each would move and store water in the system. Alternative 1 would utilize existing Delta channels to move water across the Delta, make small improvements and consider storage. Alternative 2 would utilize existing Delta channels to move water across the Delta, make significant improvements and consider storage. Alternative 3 is similar to Alternative 2, except it also adds a new channel around the east side of the Delta.

Is There a Preferred Alternative?

No. Based on the technical and stakeholder analysis of the potential solutions -- alternatives -- it was decided that additional public input was needed to identify a preferred alternative. All alternatives were evaluated by technical staff and public working committees against such criteria as benefits to water quality, impact on fish and wildlife, total cost and operational flexibility. The draft programmatic EIS/EIR summarizes these evaluations. Technical performance needs to be considered in the context of assurances, finances, ability to implement, and the public comments received on the draft programmatic EIS/EIR. A preferred alternative will be chosen

after the public comment period ends and will be identified in the final programmatic EIS/EIR.

Will Californians Get More Water?

The Bay-Delta system is currently not able to reliably supply water for agriculture, urban areas and the environment. Proposed improvements to the Bay-Delta system -- such as water conservation, water recycling, water transfers, watershed management, changing the timing of when water is pumped from the Delta for export, and improving the way water flows through the Delta -- will result in additional water for the environment, agriculture and urban uses.

Will This Change Water Rights?

No. CALFED is not proposing any changes to existing water rights law.

Will Land Be Converted as Part of the Plan?

Implementation of levee system improvements, ecosystem restoration, and the water quality program will result in some land conversion. Use of land already owned by the government and other possibilities will be considered prior to converting prime agricultural land, and additional measures to mitigate these impacts will be included. Third-party impacts of such actions will be carefully evaluated and taken into consideration.

How Do the Alternatives Differ in Cost?

There are relatively minor differences in cost among the alternatives. The total cost differential among the alternatives is on the order of \$1.5 billion. Program capital costs range from about \$9 billion to \$10.5 billion including the common program elements, storage and conveyance. Approximately \$4 billion of this cost is for the common program elements. Up to \$5 billion of this cost would be for storage facilities, if a decision was made to implement all of the storage analyzed (6 million acre feet). Annualized costs will range from \$500 to \$600 million.

Where Will the Funding Come From?

Financing will be raised over the next few decades through a combination of federal, state and user funds. The people of California are committed to improving the Delta. This is evidenced by the passage of Proposition 204 in 1996, which provided more than \$450 million for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program's environmental enhancement efforts. Federal authorization for an additional \$430 million over three years has also

been secured. In October 1997, President Bill Clinton signed an appropriations bill containing \$85 million for the Bay-Delta system. This funding for early implementation of the Program's environmental actions reflects the fundamental need to restore the ecosystem as an essential component of a comprehensive solution to Bay-Delta system problems.

Who Is Administering Current and Future Funds?

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program agencies are ultimately charged with administering the Program's funds. Each potential solution will include an implementation strategy and a set of assurances that the solution will achieve what it sets out to do.

What Happens Next?

When the public comment period is over, CALFED staff will incorporate the comments into the final document. The final programmatic EIS/EIR will then be released for a 30-day review period, likely in late 1998. Then, the CALFED state and federal lead agencies will be asked to certify the document, after which implementation and subsequent environmental review for site-specific projects will begin. Implementation will take place over approximately the next 30 years.

How Long Will it Take To Solve the Problems?

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program focuses on resolving long-term problems. While the full CALFED solution will be implemented over as many as 30 years, significant improvements are expected to begin in 1999, after the initial environmental review process is complete, and consistent with the need for any additional site-specific environmental review.

Some environmental restoration has already begun, as the 1994 Bay-Delta Accord called for the early implementation of nonflow related ecosystem restoration projects consistent with the overall Program. This provision is known as "Category III." CALFED solicited proposals and awarded \$60 million in funding for ecosystem restoration projects in 1997. There is an additional \$85 million available for ecosystem projects in 1998.

How Does Alternative 3 Compare to the Peripheral Canal of 1982?

While Alternative 3 does include a new Delta channel to take some water around the Delta from the north directly to export pumps in the southern Delta, the comparison

ends there. The largest channel proposed in Alternative 3 (15,000 cubic feet per second) is smaller than the proposed Peripheral Canal (23,000 cfs), with other Alternative 3 variations ranging from 22% to 44% of the Peripheral Canal's capacity. In addition, Alternative 3 is part of a comprehensive interrelated package that also addresses ecosystem restoration, levee system integrity, water quality and water use efficiency. The CALFED approach is based on finding a comprehensive solution to the problems of the Bay-Delta system. To meet the objectives of the Program, the solution cannot solve the problems in one area by making problems in another area worse. The Peripheral Canal in 1982 did not come with these durable and long-term assurances.

How Is the Public Involved?

CALFED has worked for three years with the public, urban and agricultural water users, fishing interests, environmental organizations, businesses, watershed organizations, and the public to define and evaluate alternatives for solving the problems confronting the Bay-Delta system. Already, thousands of Californians have contributed to the Bay-Delta Program by volunteering time, sharing expertise, and expressing ideas and opinions. Public meetings are held periodically throughout California, and more than a dozen topic-specific work groups hold meetings open to the public on a regular basis. In addition, a federally-chartered group of more than 30 representatives from the state's leading urban, agricultural, business and environmental interests are serving as members of the Bay-Delta Advisory Council, which meets regularly in a public setting to review the Program's progress and provide comment and advice.

Ultimately, it is the active participation of the entire public that will help fix the Bay-Delta. Government alone cannot solve the problem.



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